HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 15.1.6
Halifax Regional Council
January 23, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 11, 2024

SUBJECT: **New Sidewalk Level of Service**

ORIGIN

2022/23 Public Works Business Plan (New Sidewalk Selection Process) which states:

To improve the candidate selection process for urban, suburban, and rural sidewalks, strategic advice will be provided to Regional Council that will focus on

1) Updating project selection criteria
2) Determining a sustainable approach to address the backlog, and
3) Developing long-term funding requirements

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c.39**

Municipal expenditures
79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if
(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

Interpretation
317 In this Part, "street" means a public street, highway, road, lane, sidewalk, thoroughfare, bridge, square and the curbs, gutters, culverts and retaining walls in connection therewith, but does not include bridges vested in the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission and streets vested in His Majesty in right of the Province.

Streets vested in Municipality
318 (1) All streets in the Municipality are vested absolutely in the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PAGE 2

(2) In so far as is consistent with their use by the public, the Council has full control over the streets in the Municipality.

Street related powers
322 (1) The Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean, and clear streets in the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to implement those components of the 2022/23 Public Works Business Plan related to the selection of sidewalks for development with the objective of the implementation to be:

1. constructing approximately 55 kilometres of sidewalk on high need streets within the urban tax boundary before 2034 using funding within the existing budget plan, and other cost-sharing opportunities that may become available;

2. continuing to use an evaluation tool to identify the highest need segments and to fill those gaps as per the approach presented in the Discussion section of this report, including a greater focus on stand-alone projects on major roads; and,

3. exploring options to share the costs of new sidewalks with public and private sector organizations where the need is generated by new development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to confirm Regional Council direction on the ten-year approach to filling high need gaps in the sidewalk network within the urban tax boundary of HRM. Having this direction will enable staff to conduct more informed project planning and prioritization and ensure sufficient resources are in place for Public Works to plan, design, construct and maintain this infrastructure.

Building new sidewalks within the urban tax boundary is a key part of HRM's Roads and Active Transportation capital budget. There are many streets without sidewalks and as a result, people are forced to walk on sod, gravel shoulders or in the street. Filling in these gaps addresses municipal planning, road safety, climate change, and accessibility policy. There are approximately 800km of streets that, if they were built according to today's standards, should have sidewalks. Most gaps are in suburban communities, built, approximately, between the 1950s and the 1990s.

Since 2008 HRM has had a proactive program to prioritize high-need segments and to build them, typically in conjunction with larger integrated road rehabilitation projects. Since 2012, about 41 kilometres of new sidewalk have been added by HRM. This represents about 3.7km per year. The annual new sidewalk budget has been in the range of $2.5-$3 million for many years.

In the discussions for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 budgets, Regional Council directed staff to add staff design capacity in 2022 and add $3 million of new capital funding annually for new sidewalk starting in 2024. This doubled the budget to add new sidewalk and, in part, generated the need for this report. The additional funding enables more flexibility in implementation approaches and should enable more near-term progress on high-need areas for new sidewalk. Significant recent inflation means that while the budget has doubled, this will not equate to doubling the number of kilometres compared to previous years.

Evaluation criteria was updated to help set a target to reflect high-needs areas. The criteria used since 2008 focus on the proximity of pedestrian destinations such as schools, stores, and transit services, as well as population density, existing road conditions, and social equity. Criteria that were modified for this report included adding extra weight to social equity and including all segments of major roads. The transition to an automated tool using HRM's mapping systems has enhanced the evaluation process.

Using this criteria and automated tool, combined with staff review, about 155km has been identified as higher need areas for sidewalk. The high-need gaps are on higher-order streets such as arterials and major

collectors but also exist on well-connected local streets, streets close to schools, and streets with transit service.

The proposed “sustainable approach to address this backlog” going forward is to:

1) continue integrating new sidewalk construction with larger street rehabilitation projects that corresponds to these high-need gaps;
2) place more emphasis on stand-alone (non-integrated) projects on the higher need gaps with no near-term integration opportunities. This is more viable than before given the increased new sidewalk capital budget;
3) add new sidewalk with multi-modal corridor projects as currently planned (e.g. Herring Cove Road and Dutch Village Road);
4) seek opportunities for shorter connections that may still provide more immediate improvements (e.g. connections to bus stops or between intersections and existing sidewalk and a key corridor destination); and,
5) experiment with other infrastructure options (e.g. precast curb barriers in the street to provide pedestrian space) to provide more immediate safety improvements at a lower cost.

The “long-term funding requirements” to complete this 155 km of new sidewalk is in the range of $270 million. This report proposes constructing about one-third of the higher-need new sidewalks (or about 55km) in the next ten years using funds in the current ten-year capital plan. Within the current ten-year budget plan there is about $97 million which could be available for new sidewalks. There may also be opportunities for infrastructure funding from other orders of government to support such projects which would either reduce the HRM funds required or increase the amount of work that could be accomplished.

While this report focusses on existing high-need areas for sidewalks, there are new areas of high need being created as new residential development occurs abutting roads without sidewalks. These new developments are generating the need for municipal sidewalk infrastructure, but distinct from other infrastructure categories, developers have not traditionally been asked to contribute to the cost of adding such sidewalks connecting to their developments.

BACKGROUND

There are many gaps in the sidewalk network within the urban tax boundary in HRM and new gaps are emerging as the municipality grows. Map 1 below illustrates the communities within that boundary. There are an estimated 800 kilometres of streets in HRM that don’t have sidewalks but should if they were being built today. Addressing this sidewalk deficit is the focus of this report.

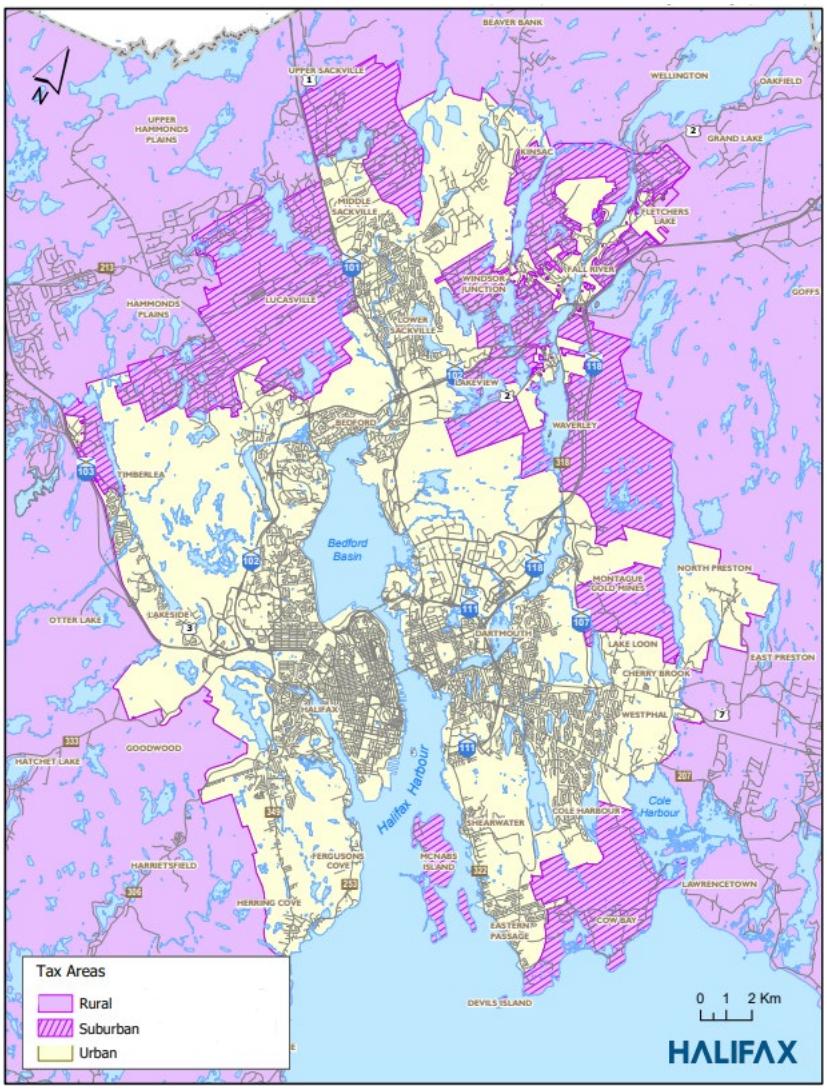
Existing sidewalk gaps are due to three main reasons. They include:

1) differing standards for street design over time and in the various municipal units that existed before amalgamation for arterial, collector and local streets. Sidewalks were more commonly built historically in the urban core communities of Halifax and Dartmouth. Farther from the core, mostly in suburban communities, residential areas as well as industrial and commercial corridors were built without consistent sidewalk infrastructure pre-amalgamation. If these streets were built according to today’s requirements, there would have to be sidewalks.
2) places where sidewalks may not have been necessary in the past, but where new residential and commercial development generates a need for new sidewalk. For example, while new residential streets in Middle Sackville are built with sidewalks, the main community corridor, Sackville Drive/ Trunk 1, has never had a sidewalk. Now with a higher population and many more community destinations and transit service, sidewalks are required. Similar gaps exist or will soon exist on corridors such as Larry Uteck Boulevard and Timberlea Village Parkway. These are now higher-ranking priorities for HRM to build new sidewalk than before adjacent urban development occurred.

3) places where factors related to constructability and resulting significant cost make adding a sidewalk prohibitive. These are locations where, for example, the side of the road is at the edge of a significant grade change, body of water or other challenging terrain. These are areas where, if options such as narrowing the road or building retaining wall (for example) are not possible, there will continue to be gaps.

The consequence of gaps in the sidewalk network is that people must walk on informal paths, the side of the street or the shoulder of the road. This impacts their safety, comfort and ability to access services, shopping, public transit and other destinations. It is particularly difficult for people with mobility challenges and younger and older residents. The other consequence is that people choose not to walk due to safety concerns.

Map 1: Location of Urban Tax Boundary



Policy Context

Providing sidewalk facilities for pedestrians supports a range of municipal plans and policies. These include:

Making Connections: a 2014-2019 Active Transportation Priorities Plan (the AT Plan) was adopted by Regional Council in 2014 and was extended to 2023 in the *Integrated Mobility Plan*. A key recommendation in the plan is to fill gaps in the sidewalk network, especially on major corridors.

The *Integrated Mobility Plan* (IMP) was adopted in 2017 and outlines the need to develop healthy, affordable, sustainable, and connected transportation options for residents throughout the municipality including investment in infrastructure like sidewalks for walking and rolling. IMP Action 7 is to make it easier and safer to walk throughout the Halifax Region by identifying and implementing new sidewalks, and multi-use pathways to connect networks and better manage interactions between pedestrians and motor vehicles. The IMP also includes a target that at least 30% of all trips should be made by AT and transit by 2031. Attaining these targets is part of reaching *HalifACT* greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

HRM's *Strategic Road Safety Framework* (2018) identifies pedestrian collisions as a major emphasis area to address as we move towards zero fatalities and injuries for any road user. The construction of new sidewalks is listed as an engineering countermeasure that can help the municipality achieve these goals.

New sidewalks will support the goals of the *Halifax Accessibility Strategy* (2021).

The construction of new sidewalks also supports Halifax Transit's *Moving Forward Together Plan* (2016) with a focus on improving accessibility to and from transit stops.

Financial Policy Context

Funding of sidewalk infrastructure is covered through the capital budget process of resource allocation and prioritization. New sidewalks in the urban area are funded through general rated revenues and appear as capital budget items. In this sense, sidewalks are funded as most other public infrastructure in HRM.

Traditionally, eligibility for new sidewalk has been included within the urban tax rate, but not the rural and suburban tax rate. As such, *Administrative Order 2022-008-ADM* was ratified by Council in February 2023. This provides partial funding for sidewalk infrastructure in rural areas subject to criteria and listed candidate communities set out in the AO.

In both 2021 and 2022, Budget Committee requested consideration of an increased capital budget for new sidewalks. As a result, a new design engineering team was hired (in 2022) and $3 million was added to the annual capital budget (starting in 2024-25). This Level of Service report builds on this direction with further information on targets and timelines as well as the capacity and budget required to address high-need sidewalk gaps.

Types of Sidewalks

HRM's Municipal Design Guidelines set out the types of sidewalks to be built. They include the following:

1) Sidewalks on local streets are typically concrete, 1.5 metres wide and have a buffer containing sod, trees, signage and utility poles between the sidewalk and the road.
2) Sidewalks on busier streets such as collectors and arterials are also concrete and tend to be 1.8 metres wide with a buffer containing sod, trees, signage and utility poles between the sidewalk and the road.
3) Sidewalks that abut the curb directly (no grass buffer) are concrete and 2.1 metres wide with utility poles and signage in the sidewalk next to the street. They are 2.5 metres at bus stops.
4) Multi-use pathways in the street are 3-4 metres wide, have been designated by the Traffic Authority for use by both bicycles and pedestrians, are asphalt surfaced and typically have a sod buffer for trees, utility poles and signs.

The guidelines specify sidewalks on both sides of arterials and collector streets and on one side for local streets.

The designs used for this infrastructure are based on national guidelines. Key factors in sidewalk design include safety, accessibility, maintenance, durability and how they intersect with adjacent facilities such as street crossings and abutting private property.

Sidewalks within Urban Tax Boundary in context with other Active Transportation infrastructure

Sidewalks in the urban tax boundary are one of several categories of AT infrastructure that the municipality builds and maintains. These facilities are all funded from the same capital account and, to a certain degree, compete for priority. Therefore, in setting targets for new sidewalks, the other AT infrastructure costs need to be considered and balanced over the ten-year budget plan and are important when considering the amount of funds available to construct new sidewalk in higher need areas. Typically, new sidewalks account for about half of the annual capital budget for AT, excluding bicycle infrastructure in the regional centre.

The other categories that are covered from the AT Capital account are:

1) Regional Active Transportation Connections. These are typically multi-use pathways and structures that play a critical role in connecting communities, overcoming barriers (e.g., highways) and facilitating multi-modal connections. They are almost all in suburban communities. Some overlap with high-need sidewalk gaps (e.g., Cobequid Road and Pleasant Street/Main Road), but for the most part, they are distinct. While there is Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program funding for a number of these, the HRM share comes from the same budget as new sidewalks within the urban tax boundary.
2) Grants to support community groups building and maintaining AT infrastructure. These funds support AT infrastructure that is owned by the Province and built and maintained by volunteer community groups. This is typically about $500,000 annually.
3) Rural community sidewalks. Council has directed staff to add at least five new rural community sidewalks or multi-use-use pathways in rural communities (outside urban tax boundary). While such communities are subject to an area rate, the amount generated in the short-medium term will typically be less than the capital cost of the new sidewalk. As such, constructing these is a budget priority to be balanced with other priorities.
4) Active Transportation General. This category covers Planning, Design, Tactical, Land Acquisition, Amenities and Education and Promotion. This is generally between $500,000 and $1,000,000.
5) Potential future categories. For example, there may be a need to include suburban bicycle infrastructure within this budget in future years as the focus transitions from the Regional Centre to more suburban communities. Also, an update to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan may identify other priorities.

Other capital accounts that fund AT infrastructure include the Regional Centre AAA bikeways account and the multi-modal corridor accounts.

Sidewalks within new developments are built by developers and then transferred to HRM for ongoing maintenance.

Process to add sidewalk within urban tax boundary

Between amalgamation in 1996 and 2008 there was no formal process or budget to support the construction of new sidewalk. Any sidewalk that was built was an exception and typically added to street recapitalization projects. Some of the new sidewalk in this period was also added via Local Improvement Charges where residents paid for the addition of the sidewalk via an incremental fee.

Since 2008, the process of identifying high-need gaps in the sidewalk network has been based on citizen requests and street rehabilitation planning. The discrepancy between the high demand and need for new sidewalk and the limited resources available, led to a need for an evaluation and prioritization process. Now, staff investigate each request and assign a score using an assessment tool.

The criteria used in the evaluation include proximity to pedestrian generators such as:

- schools, daycares, and seniors' centres;
- parks, playgrounds, libraries, and municipal recreation centres;
- transit stops and terminals;
- commercial areas, employment opportunities (e.g., institutions); and

- high-density residential areas.

They also include the classification of road, if the request fills a gap in the sidewalk network, and other safety related factors (e.g., sight lines, road width).

For each factor, a score is provided indicating the level of need. This informs whether the sidewalk should be prioritized for construction. Over time a database of needed segments has been accumulated which helps inform the overall assessment of sidewalk gaps in the municipality.

In 2022, a new spatial management tool in ArcGIS was developed to automatically identify needed segments of new sidewalk. This tool uses the same criteria as above but can access data embedded in HRM mapping systems directly (e.g., location of transit stops and daycares). This improves the ability to visualize the gaps, understand their network implications, and does not depend on citizen requests (although these are still a valuable source of information).

Criteria have also been modified over time. In particular, a socio-economic lens was incorporated as per IMP recommendations to prioritize new sidewalk in areas of greater deprivation and walking dependency. Specifically, the tool considers equity by using the Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation – a measurement collected by Statistics Canada that identifies levels of inequality through various measures of social well-being, including health, economics, education and justice.

While these evaluation processes provide a fast and objective way to assess need for new sidewalk, there is always a staff review function to confirm findings, determine any irregularities and make final decisions on need and priority, before any decision to construct.

Sometimes places where a sidewalk gap is ranked high are challenging places to build. This may be due to steep slopes or presence of rock or a body of water that would be challenging to address. In such cases, alternatives such as narrowing the curb-to-curb width or using the other side of the street may be considered. However, in some cases, it is not practical to build new sidewalk.

Current HRM approach to filling sidewalk gaps in urban tax boundary

After the need for new sidewalk is established, the next step is to determine when and how it should be constructed. As noted above, a key part of this is to determine the feasibility of construction if it is in an area with constraints.

The approaches include:

1) Integrated with road recapitalization projects. The typical approach to choosing which new sidewalk to build has been to identify corridors that are candidates for larger-scale recapitalization projects (i.e., new pavement and curbs) and to build new sidewalk on corridors or segments of those corridors that rate higher on the prioritization process. This has been the predominant approach as it is cost-effective to install sidewalk when it can be integrated with a larger project.

   Under this approach, HRM has allocated a capital budget for new sidewalks that has ranged from $2.5 - $3 million in recent years. This allows for construction of approximately 5-10 projects annually. Since 2012, approximately 41km of new sidewalk was added in higher-need locations around the municipality. This is an average of about 3.7km/construction season.

2) Stand-alone new sidewalk projects. Increasingly, and usually on arterial and major collector streets, high-need new sidewalks are being built as stand-alone projects. This is because there are no near-term major integration opportunities, and the need is high. Examples of this include recent work on Herring Cove Road and planned work on St Margaret's Bay Road. The approach in the Discussion section below proposes more of these types of projects, especially given the additional funding added to the capital budget in 2023.

3) Multi-modal corridor redesign and reconstruction projects. These are major projects that involve changes to road cross-sections such as upcoming projects on Bedford Highway, Dutch Village Road and Herring Cove Road. These streets have segments with high need for sidewalks which will be addressed as the new cross-sections are built. They have separate capital budgets and do not draw on the new sidewalk budget.

DISCUSSION

This section identifies a proposed “level of service” for addressing gaps in the sidewalk network, provides current approaches to updating the new sidewalk prioritization criteria, suggests approaches to addressing the backlog and updates the longer-term funding requirements.

The proposed ten-year level of service target, costs and implementation approach are based on the best information available at this time. Setting this target now improves Public Works' ability to plan, design and construct new infrastructure and to prepare for ongoing maintenance. As with any longer-term capital expansion goal, many factors are difficult to predict that will influence its attainment. These include inflation, complexities and challenges of specific projects, integration with external partners, cost sharing opportunities and internal and external capacity to deliver. Regardless, the recent expansion in the new sidewalk budget combined with a proposed expansion after 2028 provide the opportunity to make meaningful progress that will enhance accessibly, safety, sustainability and health for HRM residents and visitors.

Proposed “Level of Service” for sidewalks within the urban tax boundary

The Project Planning and Asset Management group in Public Works is using the term “level of service” to refer to the target inventory and quality of various types of transportation infrastructure. The targeted level of service for new sidewalk refers to the total kilometres of road segments that are ranked as higher-need sidewalk infrastructure.

This is an estimated 155km of new sidewalk needed within the urban tax boundary of HRM. This is based on a review according to the above needs’ evaluation process, using the spatial management tool in ArcGIS and supplemented by staff review and assessment of these findings. This total has not been reviewed in detail for constructability, so there are likely some segments that have conditions that make sidewalk construction unfeasible.

The types of corridors in HRM that have high-need sidewalk gaps along with the estimated total gap are identified below.

1) Arterial and collector streets that were formerly more rural in character, but new developments connecting to these streets have led to a need for sidewalk. Examples of these include Sackville Drive in Middle Sackville, Larry Uteck Boulevard (west of Highway 102), and Timberlea Village Parkway There are about 31 km in sidewalk gaps on these types of streets.
2) Arterial and collector streets that were built with inconsistent sidewalk infrastructure over time that now have gaps. These include the Bedford Highway, Herring Cove Road, St Margaret’s Bay Road, Cow Bay Road and Cobequid Road. There are about 50km of sidewalk gaps on these types of streets.
3) Communities within the urban tax area that are more rural in some characteristics but are experiencing changes that result in a need for new sidewalk. Such segments tend to be in places like Cherry Brook-Lake Loon, Waverley, and North Preston. There are roughly 10km of these types of sidewalk gaps.
4) The streets in the earlier Business Parks (Burnside, Bayers Lake, Bluewater) that at the time did not require sidewalk and now have high-need gaps. This represents a roughly 17km gap in high-need sidewalks.
5) Local Streets which provide access to places like schools, parks and adjoining higher-order streets. There are about 48km of this type of sidewalk gap, though this total could be higher and often depends on a more focussed review of local travel patterns, any existing alternatives and other factors.

Another category to consider is future high-need sidewalk gaps. These are typically on arterial and collector streets which are expected to experience significant new development. Herring Cove Road south of Golden Way has no sidewalk now but will soon have several new residential communities that will result in an increased need for sidewalk. As an example, this future need on Herring Cove Road could cost between $3.5 million (one side) and $7 million (both sides) to construct.

Updated project selection criteria

The existing process and criteria to assess the priority of sidewalk gaps were first developed and used in 2008 and are outlined above. Initially, the segments that were assessed were based on requests submitted from the public, and then staff manually assessed each segment. This process was enhanced and automated in 2022 when a new tool using the municipality's ArcGIS system became functional and enabled more automated analysis using the same criteria and weighting.

For this report, staff adjusted several criteria. They are:

1) The social equity criteria was given extra weight, and the weight given to proximity to origins and destinations was slightly diminished.
2) The previous criteria also considered the "constructability" of a potential new facility. However, this was removed from the assessment criteria as it does not reflect need. Constructability is assessed after a new sidewalk segment is identified as having a higher ranking and is being considered for construction.
3) Sidewalk gaps on key regional arterials and collectors were included. While in some cases small segments on these corridors may not rate the highest (e.g., a segment with no commercial destinations), their role as regional connectors and streets with transit service create a high need for sidewalk, often on both sides of the street.

Changing the criteria resulted in minimal change to the total amount of new sidewalks needed from what was assessed in 2022. The overall distance of needed sidewalks increased, but most likely from the coverage of the automated tool over the request-based inventory. A number of segments did score higher than before with updated criteria.

Going forward, the criteria of proximity to schools will continue to be critical in establishing need. Council's recent approval for HRM to more proactively support Active School travel Planning reaffirms this.

Determining a sustainable approach to address the backlog within the urban tax boundary

Given the significant need, high cost and limited budget to build new sidewalk, a strategic and sustainable approach is needed to meet municipal needs for safer and more accessible places for people to walk and roll.

The approach used almost entirely since 2008 has been to only build new sidewalks in conjunction with road rehabilitation projects. While this approach has likely saved time and money through integration, it means that some of the highest-ranking segments have had to wait.

Going forward there will be several approaches to constructing new sidewalk. They are:

1) Continue to add high-priority segments in conjunction with overall street rehabilitation. Given the many places needing new sidewalk, it is inevitable that there will continue to be opportunities to integrate new sidewalk with larger recapitalization projects.
2) Each year several highest priority new sidewalk projects on streets with no near-term larger rehabilitation projects or where there are no major benefits of an integrated approach will be implemented. These may be corridors such as St Margret's Bay Road, Cobequid Road or Burnside Drive. Approximately half of the budget will be allocated to such projects.

3) The Multi-modal Corridor Projects (Bedford Highway, Herring Cove Road, Dutch Village Road, and Alderney Drive) are a particular type of such integrated projects that will include new sidewalk construction. These projects have distinct budgets and typically involve larger-scale transformations of the corridor.
4) Build shorter, more localized improvements, either as standalone or in conjunction with integration projects. The scale of overall need means that in some cases shorter segments that partially fill gaps will be built. For example, short segments of sidewalk that connect transit stops to pedestrian crossings where a continuous sidewalk exists on the other side of the street.
5) Experimentation with other, lower-cost ways to create safer places for people walking, especially on more local streets. For example, in other jurisdictions precast concrete curb is added at the edge of a street to create a separated corridor for people walking.

Lastly, it will be a goal to ensure all parts of the urban tax area receive equal consideration for new sidewalk. Given need is relatively evenly distributed across suburban HRM communities, it is expected that new construction would also be conducted somewhat evenly across these areas with high needs.

Developing long-term funding requirements.

The current estimated total for new sidewalks in higher need areas is about 155km and the funding required is over $250 million.

The cost of constructing a sidewalk varies based on the context and surrounding infrastructure. For example, constructing a sidewalk in an urban context with existing curbs and stormwater infrastructure typically costs less – under $1 million per kilometre. In more rural and suburban arterial contexts (e.g. where there are existing gravel shoulders), building a sidewalk often requires filling the ditches as well as installing new curbs and stormwater infrastructure. Slopes and the need for retaining wall also increase cost. In this case, the cost can increase closer to $4 million per kilometre. The total costs below are, therefore based on high-level averages. A factor of $1.72 million per kilometre is used to give a rough idea of how much it would cost to fill high-need sidewalk gaps. This amount assumes a 2023 average of $1.5 million and adjusts it for an inflation rate of 3% for each of the ten years,

The source of funding for almost all new sidewalk is from municipal tax revenues. As of 2023 there is also funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program to complete AT infrastructure in a number of priority areas such as Dutch Village Road and Cobequid Road because they are part of multi-modal corridors improvements or also function as regional AT connectors.

Based on these estimates, it would require (as an order of magnitude) approximately **$267 million** to build the **155 km** of new sidewalk that represent all ‘High’ rated sidewalk in the municipality. A detailed cost estimation and summary table are presented in Table 1 below.

Current funding needs for new sidewalk within the urban tax boundary and existing resources as reflected in the HRM draft budget plan are in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Funding Needs and Existing Budget Plan Resources

	Estimated Need	**Funding identified in Year 1-4 in budget plan**	**Funding identified in years 5-10 in budget plan**
Higher need sidewalk gaps in urban tax boundary (142.5km)	$245,000,000	$22,000,000	$48,000,000
Higher need sidewalks gaps in urban tax boundary - multi-modal	$21,500,000	$550,000	$21,4500,000

projects (12.5km)			
Small community connections and tactical opportunities	To be determined	~$1,000,000	~$2,000,000
TOTAL		$22,550,000	$75,550,000

Possible funding in the existing 10-year capital plan for new sidewalks is about $97 million and could build about 55km of new sidewalk.

The options to identify resources to fill existing gaps are as follows:

- Use current funding in the HRM Capital Plan, to fill high-need gaps. This involves spending about $5.5 million annually between 2024/25 and 2027/28. There would then be a ramp-up to about $8 million per year between 2028/29 and 2033/34 for a total of $70 million. That, combined with the multi-modal projects ($24 million) and some support for experimenting with more tactical projects, will make a significant improvement to filling high-priority sidewalk gaps. The $70 million that is identified as coming from the AT Strategic account would mean that about half of the total of the amount in the current 10-year capital plan for “AT Strategic” would be allocated to high need new sidewalks. The remainder would be allocated to other AT priorities such as rural sidewalks, Regional AT Connectors, and grants to community groups. The ramp up in 2028 also requires additional design staff.
- Add funding to the HRM capital budget to accelerate progress. If Council were to signal a desire to allocate more funding to new sidewalks, it is proposed that a ramp up more than the proposed increase to $8 million annually would start in 2028.
- Seek opportunities for cost-sharing with other orders of government via infrastructure funding. Some existing high-priority segments such as Cobequid Road and Dutch Village Road are being supported with infrastructure funding now. As opportunities for funding become available, priority segments could be proposed. As well, if cost-shared funding is secured for other active transportation infrastructure categories (e.g., rural sidewalks) it could create more room in the budget for new sidewalks.

While the focus of this report is on the capital funding and staff resources required to build new sidewalk, additional funding and resources will be required to maintain the new infrastructure. At an estimated cost of $11,000 per kilometre annually to maintain new sidewalk, the addition of 55kms of new sidewalk would require about $550,000 annually. This is mainly to cover winter maintenance, but also includes other costs. There may also be requirements for new equipment or personnel.

As noted above, new sidewalk gaps will likely be created in the future as development of new neighbourhoods continues. These generate infrastructure requirements such as the need to extend water services or create new intersections, which are costs at least partially borne by the developer. For example, as new neighbourhoods are built that connect to Herring Cove Road, about two kilometres of new sidewalk will be required that also includes water drainage infrastructure. This need is not reflected in the current estimate.

Staff are currently researching comparable jurisdictions and considering tools that could help ensure sidewalk needs generated by new developments are built more quickly by sharing the cost.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on previous Regional Council direction, the recommendation of this report would not require any increase in the proposed 2024/25 Capital Plan. There is a total of $97M included in the draft 2024/25 ten-year capital plan attributed to new sidewalk construction, which will result in an estimated annual increase to the municipal operating budget of $11,000/km to maintain each new kilometre constructed. The proposed plan assumes increased design and construction starting in 2028, which would likely require an

additional two FTE's in the Design and Construction Group.

HRM's capital funding source for new sidewalks is from debt since sidewalks are a long-term asset. The table below reflects the additional debt servicing costs that will need to be paid on the $97M capital budget as well as the annual average tax bill impacts for this proposed municipal service expansion:

Budget Year	Annual Capital Budget for New Sidewalks Construction	Annual Estimated Operating Maintenance + Compensation Budget Increases	Annual Estimated Debt Servicing Costs Increases to Operating Budget	Average Tax Bill Increase Estimated for Service Expansion
2024/25	$5,500,000	$30,000	$0	$0.11
2025/26	$6,050,000	$40,000	$0	$0.14
2026/27	$6,500,000	$40,000	$385,000	$1.50
2027/28	$5,500,000	$30,000	$809,000	$2.96
2028/29	$12,000,000	$312,000	$1,264,000	$5.55
2029/30	$12,500,000	$80,000	$1,649,000	$6.09
2030/31	$12,500,000	$80,000	$2,489,000	$9.05
2031/32	$12,500,000	$80,000	$3,364,000	$12.14
2032/33	$12,500,000	$80,000	$4,239,000	$15.22
2033/34	$11,450,000	$70,000	$5,114,000	$18.27
2034/35	$0	$0	$5,989,000	$21.11

Note: Debt servicing costs assume an interest rate of 4% on 20-Year Debentures (Total Cumulative Debt cost on $97M estimated at $136M)

If Council would like to increase the targeted number of new kilometres of sidewalk over the next ten years, then additional funds would need to be identified and added to the Capital Plan and Public Works Operating Budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. There is a risk the sidewalk gap will continue to grow if greenfield development continues to be approved off of roads lacking sidewalks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no direct community engagement associated with this report. However, the recommended approach is consistent with recommendations in transportation plans. There are approximately five requests received per week for new sidewalk.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The main environmental implication is that additional sidewalk infrastructure will make it easier for residents to choose less-polluting forms of transportation. This includes improved access to transit.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

1) Set a lower or higher ten-year target for construction of new sidewalk and adjust the need for capital funding in the ten-year plan accordingly.
2) Request changes to or additional criteria for evaluation of sidewalk gaps and a different approach to implementation.
3) Not pursue updates that would require developers to pay for some of the new sidewalk that is needed due to their developments.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Anders Turim, Active Transportation Planner, Public Works (902-240-7098) and
David MacIsaac, Manager, Active Transportation, Public Works, (902-240-7852)